

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

AUGUST 2004

TWO DOLLARS





Director's Column

William L. Woodfin, Jr

What's New For The Upcoming Hunting Season

For a lot of folks, August marks the "dog days of summer," when the sun's heat beats down relentlessly, making time spent in the outdoors a real challenge. It's a time when getting up before sunrise to go fishing makes good sense. It's also a time when thoughts of cool days and good hunting start to fill one's mind. While many of you have been enjoying summer days at the beach or the mountains, here at the Department we have been busy working on ways to make your outdoor adventures more enjoyable.

As I sit here admiring the new 2004-2005 Virginia Wildlife calendar, which by the way is one of the most useful outdoor guides that you will find, I see that it's time to start making plans. If the stunning photographs don't move you to get outdoors, then some of the natural resource information, like when bucks go into rut or when state waterfowl populations peak, should get you motivated.

The word from our wildlife biologists is that this upcoming season is looking to be another winner. Hunting forecasts and harvest data can now be found in the newly expanded "Hunting & Trapping in Virginia" regulations booklet. Because of the money we saved by going to a standard magazine size in newsprint—which by the way is easy to recycle—we have been able to add species and population management information, details on managed quota hunts, a list of our outdoor education programs and events, and our very popular outdoor catalog. You can pick up a free copy at any of our more than 700 hunting and fishing license agents or stop by the Virginia Outdoor Sportsman's Show, August 13-15, at The Showplace here in Richmond. Our knowledgeable staff will be on hand to answer your wildlife questions. We've



participated in this show for more than 20 years, and for many people, this event signals the beginning of the hunting year.

At that show we'll be promoting and selling our new hunting licenses. A great benefit of this license is that you don't tear off the tag—you "notch" it. No more lost tags. The license was designed to work with our new telephone

checking system, which gives hunters the option to check their deer or spring turkey in the traditional way at a check station or to go high tech and phone 1-866-GOT-GAME. I urge you to read the new regulation booklet so you can take advantage of these timesaving changes.

While you're on the telephone, don't forget to register for your new HIP number if you hunt doves and other migratory birds. That toll free number is 1-888-788-9772. If you hunt waterfowl, you'll also need to get your federal waterfowl stamp, available through the Department and at many U.S. Post Offices.

While you're buying your hunting license, consider contributing \$2 to the Hunters for the Hungry program. Your \$2 added to all the other hunters \$2 makes a big difference in the lives of less fortunate families in Virginia.

In addition to sharing the harvest with hungry Virginians, I ask you to consider sharing the experience of hunting with young people, friends and family. Someone you know is hungry for an outdoor experience. A good way to introduce others to the rich tradition of hunting is to take them. A good start is to take a Hunter Education course because it covers how to be a safe and ethical hunter. Every year our volunteers teach thousands of people of all ages across the state through these free classes. In addition, the classes offer a network to meet other hunters and find opportunities for places to hunt.

As we go afield this hunting season, remember to wear your blaze orange, and to always be safe and responsible.

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

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Virginia Wildlife (ISSN 0042 6792) is published monthly by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Send all subscription orders and address changes to *Virginia Wildlife*, P. O. Box 7477, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0477. Address all other communications concerning this publication to *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104. Subscription rates are \$12.95 for one year, \$23.95 for two years; \$2.00 per each back issue, subject to availability. Out-of-country rate is \$24.95 for one year and must be paid in U.S. funds. To subscribe, call toll-free (800) 710-9369. Postmaster: Please send all address changes to *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 7477, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0477. Postage for periodicals paid at Richmond, Virginia and additional entry offices.

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About the cover: Each month the moon goes through four phases. The first two phases are when the moon goes from new to full, or increasing light. These phases are known as the waxing moon. When the moon

goes from full to a new moon, or decreasing light, it is called a waning moon. The effects that the moon and sun have on the earth's gravitational field has long been thought to influence everything—from the best times to go hunting and fishing, to when you should plant your crops and gardens. Photo © John Ford.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

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Left Out In The Dark

by Jack Randolph

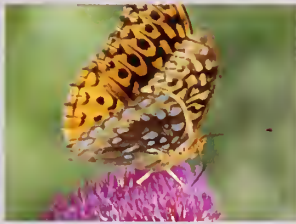
Can the phases of the moon make a difference in the success of your next hunting or fishing trip?



The Doe Harvest Debate

by Denny Quaiff

Good harvest selection equals good deer management.



National Wildlife Refuge Photo Essay

by King Montgomery

Looking for a place to get really wild? Then it's time to visit a National Wildlife Refuge.



High Country Birds

by Curtis Badger

If you're like thousands of people who enjoy seeing wildlife and bird watching, then Southwest Virginia is where the action is this summer.



Lifestyles of the Furry, Finned and Feathered

by Emily M. Grey

The "new and improved" Virginia Living Museum is now as diverse as the wildlife that call it home.

AUGUST JOURNAL

On the Water

Distress Signals Onboard?

Recipes

Dove Season Is Nearly Here

Naturally Wild

Acadian Flycatcher



Left Out In The

*Full moon, new moon,
blue moon — do the
phases of the moon
make a difference when
it comes to the best
times to go hunting
and fishing?*

by Jack Randolph

We rarely pay much attention to the moon anymore. Once upon a time, before electricity, radio or television, we lived closer to the earth and we were more aware of the natural things around us. On those rare oc-

casions when we give the moon any attention at all, we almost always think of the full moon hanging bright and shiny in a clear sky, its light so bright that it casts shadows on the moon-bright landscape.

Oh, the moon still has significance in our daily lives. We sing about it, and we continue to marvel at its beauty. We attribute to it certain powers to influence our minds or to create romantic moods.

We tend to forget that, while our world has been influenced by technology, there still exists a world where the moon is the powerful influence it always was. Where is this world? It begins just at your doorstep.

When we step out our front doors we enter an environment inhabited by thousands of creatures, ranging from microscopic life up to large ani-

mals. Although our world is constantly changing, influenced by what we call technology, this force, in many ways, has not reached the animal kingdom, except, possibly, in a negative way.

Certainly, the wild kingdom beyond our doorstep feels the sting of pesticides and pollutants. Their habitat is paved over or cut and mowed: taken away from them in many ways. Vehicles speed through their homelands, crushing many creatures under their wheels. Their ancient communities and relationships are altered as the original predators are replaced by human ones and some, perhaps, not so human. Different predators, such as cats and dogs are introduced into wildlife communities where nature never intended, but they are considered "friends of man," and because of this

Dark

way, respond to ancient signals sent forth by the sun and the moon.

It takes an average of 29½ days for the moon to circle the earth or from one full moon until the next. Most people are not aware of the waning and waxing of the moon, but animals are. If we multiply the moon's monthly circle by 12 we come up with a year that is 354 days long or a lunar year. As you know, our year is 365 days long except in a leap year. This is because the calendar we use is based on the revolution of the earth around the sun (the solar year) with some minor adjustments. Because there is over an 11-day variance between a lunar and solar year, we sometimes have months in which there are two full moons. This second full moon in a month is called a "blue moon."

I was glad to learn of the blue moon because my mother was fond of saying some things happen "once in a blue moon," and I had no idea what she was talking about. I had never seen the moon turn blue. All I knew was "once in a blue moon" meant seldom or never.

When a blue moon occurs in the spring, especially in May, it has been my experience that the fishing, especially for bluegills and other sunfish, was exceptionally good.

The full moon has, throughout time, accumulated considerable

baggage in terms of legends and in the folklore of people throughout the world. Many of the stories about the full moon I have read give it high marks for romance or sparking, if you will. When the moon is full the best thing to do is to share it with an agreeable person of the opposite sex. I say this because it has been my experience that the full moon, with a few exceptions, is good for little else, except, possibly, to give dogs and wolves something to howl about.

Trace Noel runs Shenandoah River Trips, out of Bentonville, on the South Branch of the Shenandoah River. Trace tells me that they run moonlight canoe trips on the river, not because the fishing is good, which on the full moon it isn't, but because drifting the river on a night lit by a full moon is a beautiful and romantic thing to do.

For some unknown reason, Trace tells me, the fish seem to enjoy the full moon, too. Not infrequently, in the light of the full moon, the bass are found lazing just below the surface. When startled by a silent, floating canoe they often jump high out of the water, high enough to land in the boats. On one evening as many as six bass jumped into canoes.

I spent about a decade of my life frequenting the bulkheads along a canal at night, fishing for striped bass in New Jersey. It didn't take

their depredations upon other wildlife is tolerated, even ignored.

Yet, despite the changes wrought upon their neighborhoods by the works of man, their lives are very much as they were when it all started. By nature's design all creatures exist within carefully crafted food webs in specialized habitats, all designed in one way or another to convert the sun's energy into living things or food for living things.

In this primitive world that exists within our so-called modern world, the strong consume the weak, they live, they feed, they procreate and they die. Throughout it all, these primitive creatures, each in its own

Above: Tundra swans use the moonlight to migrate and to feed by. Right: Anglers will find fishing conditions can vary greatly depending on the phase of the moon.



long to discover that stripers bit best on the dark of the moon. When the moon was full we seldom caught fish. Yet, I remember one particular night when the bright moonlight cast dark shadows on the opposite bank of the canal. A friend of mine was fishing over there, hoping to beat the full moon jinx. I could hear enough splashing to know he was catching fish, but he kept completely in the dark, never even showing his flashlight for fear of drawing company.

Later that night I ran into him in the diner where local anglers met, and I mentioned that I heard him catching fish on the other side.

"Yeh, I caught about 15 over there, but I measured them against a notch in my gaff handle and all but two were under 18 inches," he said.

"At least you caught the two," I remarked.

Then he grinned and said, "That's right. I had the two, but when I saw them in the light they weren't stripers. They were weakfish and there's no limit on them. There I was throwing back legal weakfish all night."

If you have hunted or fished long enough you will discover that the words "always" or "never" seldom apply. Wildlife seldom always or never does anything. The rules, for what they are worth, may apply most of the time, but it is rare, indeed, when they apply all of the time. Beware of those who claim otherwise.

I remember a meeting I attended in Maryland. A goose hunting club had generously given over their facilities for the weekend and the goose season was open. These were the days before geese took up residence in our states. In those days a Canada goose was highly prized, more so than it is today. I really was looking forward to that hunt, but as I drove up to Maryland the night be-

fore, I became aware the moon was full. It suddenly dawned upon me why that club became so generous that particular weekend.

Dawn found us in the cornfield pit blinds where we sat and shivered. We listened to the distant, pulse quickening cries of geese and swans, sitting on the water, thoroughly sated by their nights feeding in the light of the silvery moon on the local cornfields. Not a goose lost its life in front of our blinds that weekend.

My son, an avid and highly successful deer hunter, tells me that the full moon affects deer movements, too. He says, during the full moon, there isn't as much early morning movement as usual. Instead, there is an unusual amount of activity in the early afternoon.

Most folks are aware that tides run higher on the full moon, but some of us don't realize that the tides

rise high on the new moon as well. The reason that the tides are exceptionally high on the full and new moons is because the moon and the sun and earth are in line and the combined pull of the sun and the moon results in higher tides. These are called "spring tides."

Actually, the moon is closer to the earth than the sun, and it has a greater influence on the tides. It is estimated that the sun's pull is slightly less than half that of the moon. The moon exerts its greatest pull on the side of the earth that faces the moon. A mound of water builds up on that side. A mound of water also builds up on the side of the earth away from the moon. As the earth rotates these mounds of water move in relation to the moon. The mound closest to the moon is called the direct tide, while the one on the other side of the Earth is called the opposite tide. The two mounds of water are high tides and



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Depending on the time of year fish and wildlife will often become more active during the dark of the moon.



©Soc Clay

the areas halfway between the mounds are the low tides. In a given spot there are two high tides and two low tides each day. Actually, this doesn't quite work out because there are usually about 6 ½ hours between tides. I say "usually" because strong easterly or westerly winds can cause tides to run a little earlier if the wind is with the tide, or later, if the wind is against the tide. For practical purposes you can figure that a certain stage of tide will occur an hour later each day. For example, the high tide at noon today will occur about 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

It is important to understand the timing of the tides if you want to catch the best fishing. Often, we hear that fish bite at a certain stage of the tide. If we understand the tides we will know that, that particular stage of tide will occur an hour later the next day.

When setting the hunting seasons

for rails the biologists attempt to include as many spring tides in the open season as possible. This is because hunters depend upon the high water so they can get their shallow draft boats into the marshes to flush the elusive birds. However, nature is fickle and a strong westerly wind can influence the high tides, making them lower than usual. Conversely, east winds can push the tides inland, creating higher than usual conditions.

It has been my observation that blue crabs take advantage of the spring tides to get far back into the shallows where they shed their hard outer shells, becoming soft crabs. In the several hours the crabs are soft they are very vulnerable to predators, and the shallow water offers a measure of protection.

Of course, predators, such as speckled trout and striped bass, take advantage of the high tides to patrol the shallows for crabs. When I was a young man I used to wade the shallows at night with a light and a dip net, catching dozens of peelers and softies, which I sold.

During the first and third quarter of the moon phases the tides are not so high and tidal currents are not so strong. These are called "neap tides." It is under these dark of the moon conditions that I found night fishing to be most productive. I have also found that when the lower than usual neap tides are pushed further out by strong westerly winds, I was offered excellent opportunities to scout the tidal rivers for underwater cover where fish would lurk; cover that was hidden from view under normal water conditions.

Wildlife is generally more active in the dark of the moon. Back in my trapping days I kept careful notes of weather conditions, moon phases and temperatures, and I found that such animals as muskrats, raccoons, skunks and opossums were far more active on dark, moist, warm nights than at any other times. At the same time I found that foxes and weasels seemed to move in most any weather.



Other events that catch the attention of wildlife are solar and lunar eclipses. I remember one day in particular, when I arrived on the Chickahominy River just after a solar eclipse. One boat carrying two anglers had just returned to Lacy Allen's Camp, now known as the Riverside Camp. Those two anglers had a catch of striped bass you wouldn't believe, and they said they caught them all just as the world darkened during the eclipse.

The movement of the moon and the sun is the basis for various concepts for forecasting the best times to hunt or fish. These range from the well known Solunar Tables created by John Alden Knight in the late Twenties to little dark fish on calendars. Some sportsmen swear by these tables and others are skeptical.

As for me, I have discovered that there are two unimpeachable authorities of when I can and cannot

catch fish. They are my wife and my boss. If they say I can go fishing, I often catch a fish. If one of them says I can't go, I don't catch anything. It works every time. □

Jack Raudolph retired as the Assistant Director of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in 1991. He continues to enjoy writing about Virginia's wildlife and natural resources.

<p>★ 7:41 LAST QUARTER 4:45A-9:45A</p> <p>18</p> <p>6:31 ★ 7:47</p> <p>10:25A-3:25P</p> <p>25</p> <p>Bugges Island white bass and crappie fishing peaking Smallmouth bass on Philpott</p> <p>6:22 ★ 7:53</p> <p>4:00P-9:00P</p>	<p>5:35A-10:35A</p> <p>19</p> <p>Plant wildflower garden for butterflies and hummingbirds</p> <p>6:30 ★ 7:48</p> <p>NEW MOON 11:10A-4:10P</p> <p>26</p> <p>Stripers in Kerr Dam Tadrace Sunfish action on Suffolk Lakes gets hot</p> <p>6:21 ★ 7:54</p> <p>4:25A-9:25A</p>	<p>Turkeys begin nesting</p> <p>20</p> <p>6:28 ★ 7:49</p> <p>12:00N-5:00P</p> <p>27</p> <p>Bobcat kittens born Chipping sparrows are back First bluebird broods are fledging</p> <p>6:19 ★ 7:55</p> <p>FIRST QUARTER 5:05A-10:05A</p>	<p>ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY</p> <p>21</p> <p>6:27 ★ 7:50</p> <p>12:50P-5:50P</p> <p>28</p> <p>Cuckoos arrive Redears peaking on Lake Robertson Record Sunfish 4 lbs., 12 oz. Private Pond Michael Mills 1996</p> <p>6:18 ★ 7:56</p> <p>5:55A-10:55A</p>	<p>DAY</p> <p>29</p> <p>6:26 ★ 7:51</p> <p>1:40P-6:40P</p>
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Virginia Wildlife Calendar

If you are looking for where to find the moon phases for each month of the year, along with a wealth of other outdoor information, then you will want to pick up a copy of the new Virginia Wildlife Calendar. The 2004-2005 Virginia Wildlife Calendars are only \$10.00 each. Make check payable to: *Treasurer of Virginia* and send to Virginia Wildlife Calendar, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA. 23230-1104. If you would like to use your VISA or MasterCard you can order online at www.dgif.virginia.gov.



Hunters in search of clapper rail along Virginia's Eastern Shore know that the combination of the tides and moon phases determine the best times to pursue these gray ghosts of the marsh.

The Doe Harvest Debate

A photograph of a doe standing in a field of tall grass. The doe is looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft-focus green field.

With most deer hunters admitting to primarily being big buck hunters, changes in attitude for a more aggressive doe harvest have been slow in coming.



©Dwight Dyke

By Denny Quaiff

D aylight was starting to fade fast when I checked my watch to see how much more legal shooting time was left as two fawns came out to feed. It was the first week of the 2003 special early muzzleloading season, and the food plot, which I was hunting, was surrounded by rubs and scrapes indicating that the rut was heating up. My hunt club is enrolled in the Deer Management Assistance Program, (DMAP), and aggressive doe harvest has been one of our management goals. With only 10 minutes left to hunt, I watched the field intensely as more fawns, yearlings and adult does entered from all directions. The wind was perfect and none of the deer knew I was there. As the clock continued to tick, a 4 and a 6-point buck entered from the far end of the field. All of a sudden a 16- to 17-inch wide, 8-pointer walked out, like a ghost in the night, within 40 yards of my tripod stand. The buck looked to be a 2 ½ year old and was well within my club's slot limit, but did not measure up to my own standards.

In order to meet management objectives, clubs and landowners must harvest enough adult does to maintain a balance between the herd and the habitat. Recognizing an opportunity to be a team player and do my part to help keep our resident deer herd in check, I pulled my muzzleloader off the buck and turned on the biggest doe in the field. My harvest selection resulted in a 110 pound, 4 ½-year-old adult doe, which provided some great venison steaks, roasts and sausage for my family to enjoy throughout the upcoming year.

I don't personally know of a topic for discussion about deer hunting that has more differences of opinion than the harvesting of doe deer. When I talk on the phone to deer hunters throughout the state and visit deer camps during hunting season, this issue repeatedly comes up. In the past I have known of clubs that were divided on this issue, which resulted in separation of the group and hard feelings that were never completely resolved.

When I first started deer hunting 45 years ago, game laws in most counties allowed for the taking of bucks only. Deer herds throughout Virginia were in the restoration stages and hunt clubs and hunting groups protected the doe deer. Killing does was not acceptable by many veteran deer hunters and this same group was quick to point the finger at those who did.

Since the introduction of the statewide Deer Management Assistance Program in 1988, I have witnessed a slowly changing attitude. The hunting community and general public are recognizing the need to increase the number of either-sex hunting days and bag limits for does in order to control deer populations. However, some areas of the state are still falling short of needed doe harvest numbers, and some deer hunters still refuse to face the facts.

Benefits from Increases in Doe Harvest

1. One of the most obvious reasons to increase doe hunting is to make sure that your property stays within the confines of its carrying capacity.

Too many does will result in over browsing of the habitat, causing less than desirable body weights in both male and female deer with poor antler development found within the adult buck population. Simply put, you can only put 5 gallons of water in a 5 gallon bucket. The same logic applies to any resident deer herd's availability of natural forage, which would also be based on the number of deer living on the property. Over population within the herd can have a negative effect on the deer's health as well as the landscape which may never totally recover from the over browsing of too many hungry deer.

2. In recent years the general public has experienced many negative as-



©Bill Lea



©Bill Lea

Above: To increase the likelihood of seeing big bucks, hunters must begin to understand the importance of harvesting adult does. Doing so, will insure a healthier balance between buck and doe ratios. This will also help to maintain better carrying capacities and improve habitat.

pects from over abundant whitetail deer herds. Commercial farms have sustained extensive crop damage in fields and orchards. Gentlemen farmers have also experienced similar problems with damaged and destroyed vegetable gardens. Homeowners have lost flowers and shrubs that create eyesores to beautiful lawns throughout residential subdivisions. Deer auto accidents have cost the insurance industry in property damage and highway collision

deaths huge claim losses. I have publicly spoken as a representative for the Virginia Deer Hunters Association at county and town hall meetings where deer damage was causing public outcry. Today non-hunters and "Corporate America" are rapidly viewing the doe harvest as a positive way to control deer populations. The general public has started to look at the hunting community as part of the answer and not part of the puzzle.

3. In order to create better buck hunting, doe numbers must be reduced. Biologists tell us that fawns are born in equal numbers of males and females. Out of balance buck-to-doe ratios result in limited buck activity during the rut with fewer bucks competing for over populated doe herds. With buck mortality rates higher from hunting pressure, fighting, extended home ranges and post-rut stress, the only way to ensure better balance within a deer herd is to increase your adult doe harvest. Hunt clubs and landowners who have worked to reduce their doe population have experienced increased rutting behavior in the form of rubs, scrapes and more bucks chasing does. Several studies indicated that with a better buck-to-doe ratio the rut will run for a much shorter period of time and be more defined, resulting in fawns being born earlier. Fawns that are born from does bred during the first estrous cycle will be better developed and more self-sufficient for the cold winter months that lie ahead. Buck fawns that are born in the early spring will be larger animals in the fall and in much better shape for the winter. This same group of buck fawns is more likely to develop better antlers as yearlings, with greater potential of producing a trophy antler rack as a mature animal. In herds with over populations of does, the results will be reversed. The rut will extend for a much longer period of time often carrying well over into December with fawns being born

late in the summer. The concept of better buck-to-doe ratios is the backbone of a Quality Deer Management Program. By protecting yearling bucks and aggressively harvesting adult does the overall condition and quality of the herd will improve.

4. The statewide deer herd in Virginia is estimated to be approximately 900,000 animals and hunters continue to account for over 200,000 whitetails taken annually. More venison is showing up on the family dinner table everyday. More commercial meat processors have added whitetails to their plant operation, which has increased their business substantially. The friendly folks at Mast Meats, in Amelia County, took in over 2,300 deer from hunters for processing during the 2003-2004 hunting season. Today more hunters and non-hunters alike are taking advantage of their favorite venison recipes. With all of the hype about fat content in red meat, more health food critics are eating venison, which is considered better for your well-being than many of the meats found in the supermarket. Preparing different venison dishes has become a passion with some of your everyday kitchen chefs and viewed as chosen table fare by many Virginians.

5. Another valuable asset from increases in the deer harvest is the growing success of the Hunters for the Hungry Program. During the 2003-2004 hunting season this non-



As Virginia grows so does the loss of habitat that deer rely on for their survival. With every new housing development and shopping mall deer and human encounters are becoming more and more common.

profit, charitable organization collected over 300,000 pounds of venison that was processed and distributed statewide to the needy citizens of our great Commonwealth. The donation of harvested deer from hunters to the Hunters for the Hungry Program has been well received by the public since the program began in 1990. The opportunity to provide good, lean, red meat to feed the homeless and needy children throughout the Old Dominion has demonstrated another useable means for harvesting whitetail deer. This worthwhile relief program has been strongly endorsed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the state legislature. Virginia's Hunters for the Hungry Program is the largest of its kind in the country today.

Harvest Strategy

To aggressively harvest whitetail does landowners, hunt clubs and hunters must work together to better achieve the best results. Over the past 12 years the Amelia Springs Hunt Club, in Amelia County, has been under a Quality Deer Management Program and doe harvest has played a big part in their plan de-





©Bill Lea

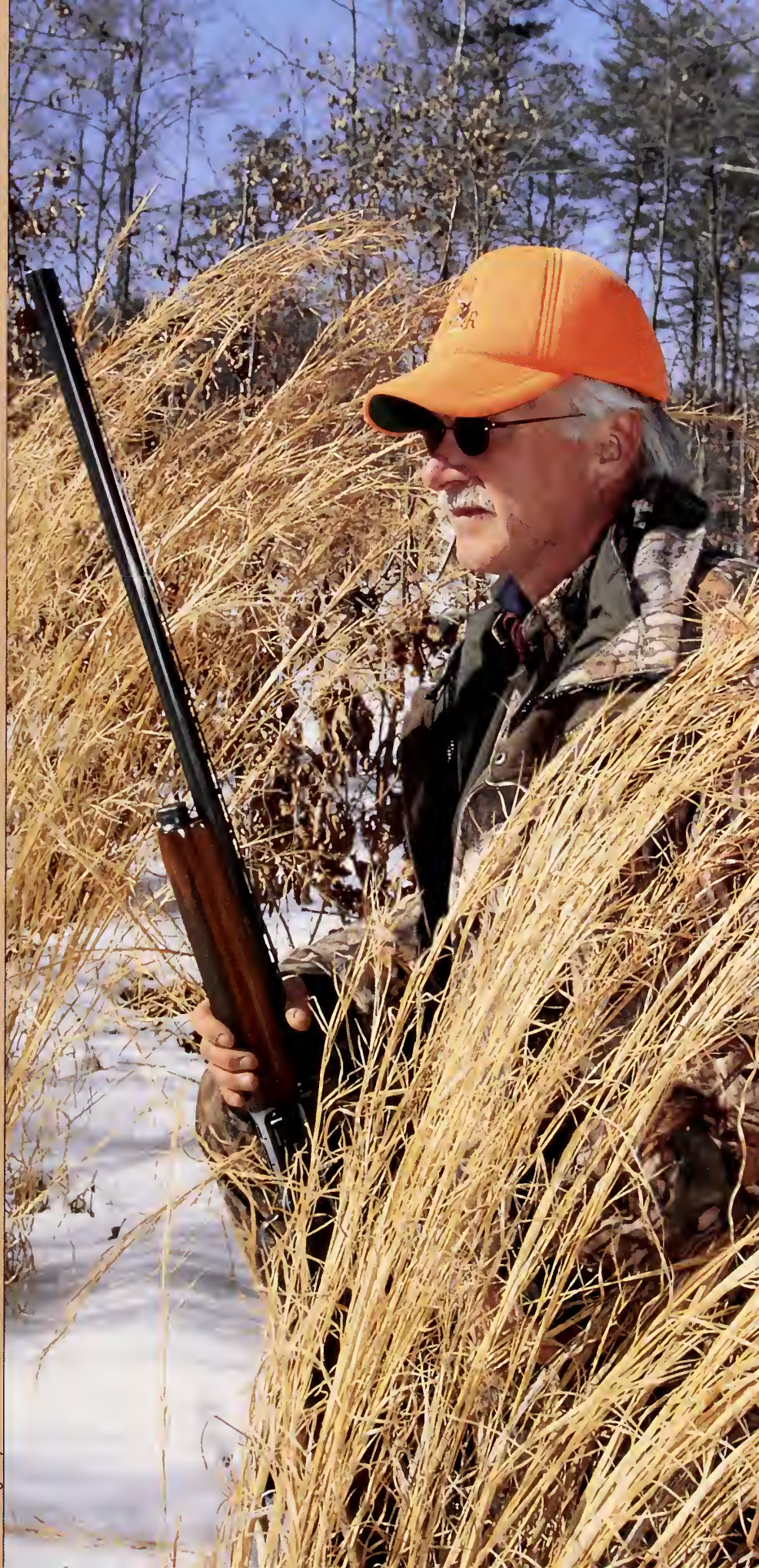
Deer Management Assistance Program

Hunt clubs and landowners interested in learning more about better white-tailed deer management should contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries about the Deer Management Assistance Program, (DMAP). The opportunity to work with professional wildlife biologists to set up a program for Quality Deer Management is currently being enjoyed by 756 DMAP cooperators throughout the Old Dominion. For more information about the program, contact VDGI at 1132 Thomas Jefferson Road, Forest, Va. 24551/call (434) 525-7522 or e-mail the deer project leader at mknox@dgif.state.va.us. The deadline to enroll in the program for the upcoming hunting season is September 15th.

Hunters for the Hungry Program

Deer hunters who would like to donate venison to the Hunters for the Hungry Program can write to the organization at P. O. Box 304, Big Island, Virginia 24526 or call/e-mail 1-800-352-4868; / hunt4hungry@cs.com. Ask for a list of their meat processors statewide in order to determine the most convenient location to your hunting area.

©Dwight Dyke



sign. As part of the deer management guidelines members are required to harvest adult does and pass shots on fawns in order to reduce the mortality of buck fawns. Any member that takes an antlered buck, which must meet the club's 16" antler beam length slot limit, is required to harvest a doe before taking another rack buck. If a member should harvest another rack buck before taking a doe that member would be required to pay a \$500 trophy fee to the club that would be earmarked for food plot work in the upcoming season. The only exception to this rule would be if a member had already taken two does prior to taking an antlered buck within the current season. Throughout the club's history there has not been any membership violation of the antlered buck slot limit requirement. During the 2003 season, does taken on the property resulted in 65 percent of the club's total harvest data. Amelia Springs Hunt Club is serious about their Quality Deer Management Program. The club is currently revising their deer management guidelines to continue improving on a system that they feel requires annual review.

The Horseshoe Mountain Hunt Club in Nelson County is another Quality Deer Management Program that I am familiar with. Club members are also mandated with a slot limit for antlered buck harvest that requires an antler spread that clearly extends beyond the tips of the buck's ears. The slot limit also requires that at least one antler beam is over 17" in length. Any buck that does not meet the slot limit will be turned over to the club and given to the Hunters for the Hungry program. The member who violated the slot limit guideline will also be required to have the deer mounted by a taxidermist chosen by the club steering committee. Members who harvest an antlered buck must then harvest two does prior to taking another buck, unless that member has already taken two does during the current deer season. Horseshoe Mountain Hunt Club expects its members to concentrate on harvesting mature does. If a member

shoots a button buck, a \$25 fine will be imposed for the first such incident and \$50 thereafter. Each button buck taken on the club's property will be forfeited to the club and given to the Hunters for the Hungry program. Horseshoe Mountain Hunt Club runs a first class operation and the results of their program continue to improve since it began in 1990.

Good harvest selection plays a major role in any deer management program. Hunters need to be focused on the job at hand when trying to meet doe quotas in order to make good, clean, killing shots. When hunting farm fields, food plots, hardwood ridges, honeysuckle thickets and other food sources for



©Bill Lea

does, it should be recognized that fawns will normally be the first deer to show up. Closely examine the body characteristics of the animal before harvesting the deer you have in your sights. Be patient and wait for more than one deer to come into range. The adult doe's body size within any deer family group should be easy to recognize and most often will be the last animal to appear within gun or bow range. Old dominant does are smart and very cautious; usually leading the deer parade when moving to and from their bedding and feeding areas. The harvest selection for does is just as important as for bucks, and hunters should treat one just as seriously as the other in order to meet management goals and objectives for the future.

Conclusion

Surveys, seminars, hunt club meetings and phone calls from deer

hunters throughout the country have plainly shown me that most deer hunters are primarily buck hunters. However, if hunters are really concerned about the future of their sport, as viewed in the eyes of the general public, and truly want to produce more bucks on their property, adequate doe harvest numbers is a must. In order to attract bucks to an area, good quality habitat and stable herd conditions must be established.

The hunting community is estimated to be less than 10 percent of the total population. The general public has taken the watchdog approach toward hunters and has started to better recognize the importance of hunting seasons. Over abundant rural and suburban deer herds have become less and less acceptable with non-hunters throughout our Commonwealth. In many areas, sharp shooters have been used to reduce deer numbers with the acceptance of this method proven to be less than desirable with neighborhood residents. Ethical hunting methods have weathered the test of time and continue to show the way for our next generation of hunters.

More either-sex hunting days and liberal bag limits for antlerless deer, along with special doe tag permits for Deer Management Assistance Program cooperators is the strength within our ranks. Continuing to educate hunters and non-hunters alike about the importance of the doe harvest is the key.

Finally, many important issues face hunters, non-hunters and wildlife professionals as all of us look for a crystal ball in order to predict the future of whitetail hunting in the Old Dominion. I feel it is safe to say, as clubs, landowners and deer hunters become more involved in deer management, hunting becomes more accepted by the general public. The future of this annual fall ritual depends on it, and hunters who truly care about our pastime must accept the responsibility! □

Denny Quaiff is the senior editor of Whitetail Times the official magazine of the Virginia Deer Hunters Association; www.virginiadeerhunters.org.



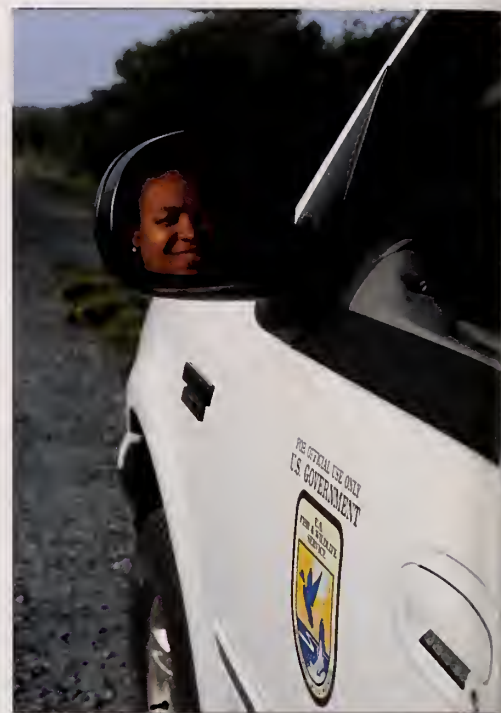
National Wildlife Refuge System

Photo Essay

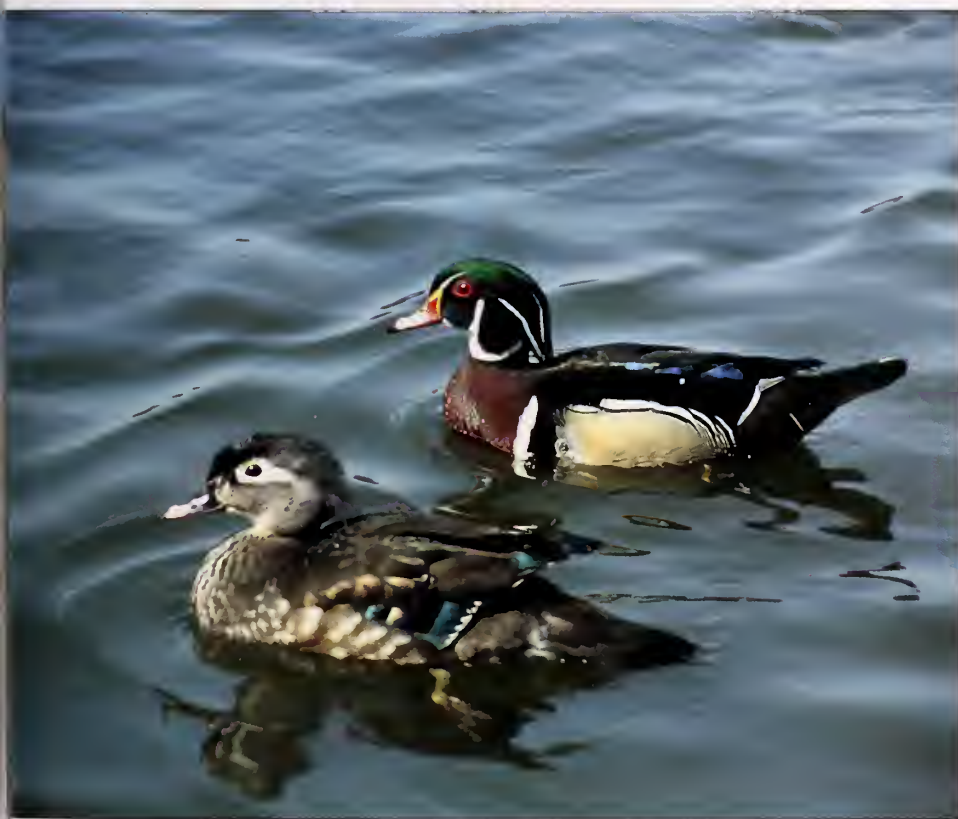
story and photos by King Montgomery

In March 2003, the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) celebrated its 100th anniversary. These special sites could become the last wild places as we continue to degrade our natural environment. In the Old Dominion, we may hunt and fish in some of our refuges, but check the regulations before visiting these unique wonders (see <http://northeast.fws.gov/va.htm>). Our refuges are an example of the wise use of natural treasures.

President Teddy Roosevelt, founder of our NWRS, felt strongly about protecting unspoiled places. When he visited an area before designating it a NWR, he had the feeling he was *"lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hand of man."*



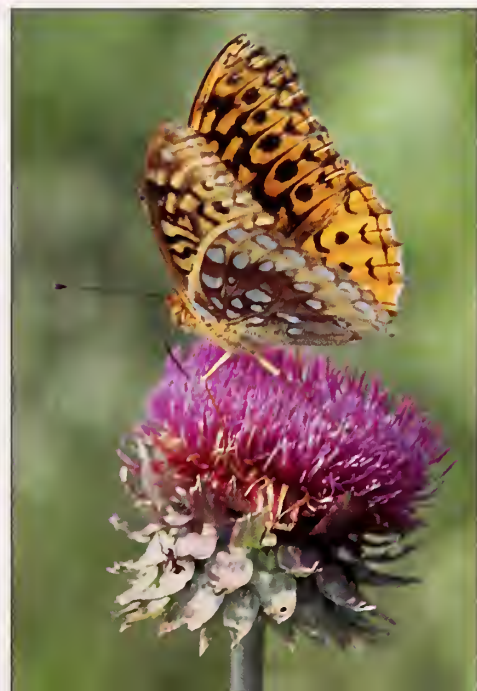
To Roosevelt, "conservation" meant: *"not only the preservation of natural resources, but the prevention of the monopoly of natural resources, so they should inhere in the people as a whole."*



T. R. was known to eschew obfuscation and get to the point. He created the first wildlife refuge in 1903 rather simply by asking: "Is there any law that will prevent me from declaring Pelican Island (Florida) a Federal Bird Reservation?" After a "no" answer, the President said: "Very well, then, I so declare it."

**Quotes are from "Theodore Rex," by Edmund Morris, 2001.*

In the early 1900s, T. R. warned: "It seems to me time for the country to take account of its natural resources, and to enquire how long they are likely to last." One could ask that question again today.



High Country BIRDS

The mountains of Southwest Virginia attract thousands of nesting songbirds and make it a prime destination for wildlife and birdwatchers.



Since the development of the Department's birding and wildlife trail system, thousands of people have been flocking to discover Virginia's wild side.



Twin Pinnacles ©Curtis Badger



Chestnut-sided Warbler, ©Rob & Ann Simpson



by Curtis Badger

Take a look at the summer range maps in your favorite bird guide and you'll find that a little yellow wedge drops southward from the northern U.S. and Canada all the way down the Appalachian chain, deep into the mountains of Southwest Virginia. This wedge represents the nesting range of many songbirds, including the colorful migrants that spend their winters in the balmy tropics of Central America.

The cool, forested highlands of Southwest Virginia are breeding and nesting grounds for many species of warblers, tanagers, vireos and other

migratory songbirds that many people assume are summer residents only of northern territories such as the Canadian provinces.

Yet, to observe these birds during nesting season one need only travel to the higher elevations of the Appalachians in Southwest Virginia. While these birds do nest in the northern U.S. and Canada, many of them shorten their spring journeys after discovering that the remote highlands of Virginia make a habitable summer home.

One of the best places in Virginia to observe breeding songbirds is the extreme southwestern part of the state near the confluence of the North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia borders. Last summer my wife, Lynn, and



Black and White Warbler, ©Rob & Ann Simpson

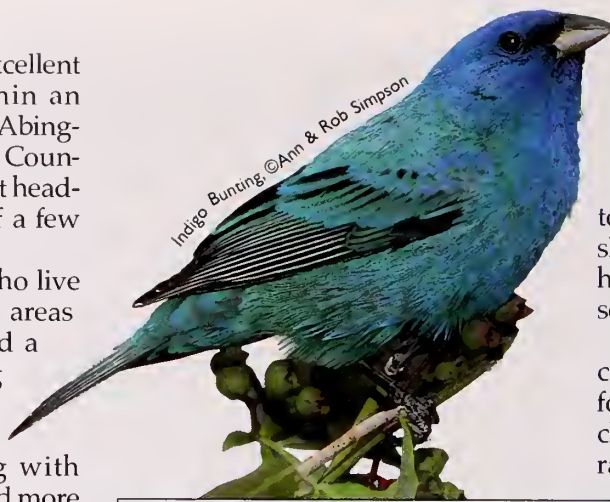
son, Tom, and I visited four excellent birding locations, all within an hour's drive of the town of Abingdon, the historic Washington County seat that makes an excellent headquarters for a birding trip of a few days.

On advice from friends who live in the area, we picked four areas that offer diverse habitat and a range of elevations, hoping that we would see high-country nesting birds such as Canada warblers along with those that prefer the lower and more intermediate levels. The four areas were the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on Brumley Mountain just west of Abingdon, Clinch Mountain WMA, Grayson Highlands State Park/Mount Rogers National Recreation Area near Damascus, and the Virginia Creeper Trail, a 34-mile former railroad bed that runs from the Mount Rogers area to the town of Abingdon.

Hidden Valley WMA

Hidden Valley WMA on Brumley Mountain, a few miles west of Abingdon, is truly high and wild, with one of the southernmost stands of red spruce on the East Coast. It has a 60-acre lake at the 3,600-foot level, and most of the tract is wooded. At the top of the mountain is a communications tower operated by a cellular phone company.

We first hiked up the service road to the tower complex, and when we reached the peak we could see only halfway up the tower because of a persistent early morning mist. But



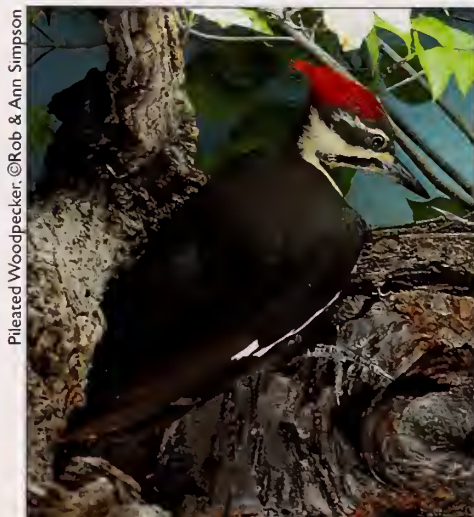
Indigo Bunting © Ann & Rob Simpson

sides, white belly, and bold white patch at the base of the primaries. I use a microcassette recorder to take notes when I'm hiking—a notepad and pencil are too clumsy and I have no ability to sketch—and I describe the bird, its habitat, elevation, and record its song.

By mid-morning the mist was clearing, and we discovered what for us was the prize of the day, a male chestnut-sided warbler, which we rarely see on the coast. It was a male



Twin Pinnacles © Curtis Badger



Pileated Woodpecker © Rob & Ann Simpson

we did see birds, and hear birds, all along the trail. The first was a northern parula—heard and not seen—somewhere off in the mist. The song is similar to that of a prairie warbler—a trill that rises in pitch—but it ends with an abrupt “zit.”

The first highland warbler we saw was a black-throated blue. Even in the mist the bird was readily identifiable, with its black throat and

in breeding plumage—yellow crown, black eye line and whiskers, chestnut on the flanks—a handsome little bird.

On the way down we spotted a large bird thrashing about in the underbrush, and as we approached, it accommodated us nicely by perching on the lower branch of an oak. It was a rufous-sided towhee, a male, and when I clicked on the recorder it

cooperated further by repeating its call note, "tow-WHEE," several times.

There were other songs we could not identify, and by the time we returned to the car we had persuaded ourselves to invest in a cassette set of bird songs the next time we were in a birding shop.

We returned to Hidden Valley Lake and had lunch along the shore, accompanied by a pair of mallards. Along the wooded western shore of the pond, wood ducks had taken up



Kentucky Warbler, ©Rob & Ann Simpson

proximately 15 miles northeast of Hidden Valley, and as part of the Appalachian chain it is high, rugged territory with crests of more than 4500 feet.

A well-maintained service road follows Laurel Bed Creek along the slopes of Clinch Mountain, ending at 300-acre Laurel Bed Lake. Small rocky streams are abundant, and Big Tumbling Creek, which joins Laurel Bed Creek, is a popular trout stream.

Birds vary according to season and elevation, but the list of nesting songbird species is impressive. It includes our largest warbler, the yellow-breasted chat, the hooded warbler, common yellowthroat, black and white warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, wood thrush, worm-eating warbler, black-burnian warbler, magnolia warbler, northern parula, red- and white-eyed vireos, Kentucky warbler, ovenbird, American redstart, scarlet tanager, prairie warbler, Acadian flycatcher and blue-gray gnatcatcher. In the higher elevations are Canada warblers, black-throated greens and blues, chestnut-sided, solitary vireos and veerys. Indigo buntings seem to be abundant at all elevations.

Common resident birds include the northern cardinal, American goldfinch, purple and house finches, eastern meadowlark, song sparrow, field sparrow, cedar waxwing, northern mockingbird, eastern bluebird, Carolina wren, bluejay, pileat-

ed woodpecker, downy and hairy woodpeckers, northern flicker, belted kingfisher, eastern screech-owl, great horned owl and barred owl.

The high, open areas are great for observing the fall hawk migration, and the nearby Mendota Fire Tower is widely used for this purpose.

The well-maintained service roads of Clinch Mountain WMA make it popular for those who want to see birds but are unable or unwilling to tackle the steep slopes by foot. We spent an afternoon there after a morning of rather strenuous hiking at Hidden Valley, so we appreciated the more passive approach to birding the facility afforded. We drove to the summit, stopping often at pullovers to look for birds or to wade in Laurel Bed Creek.

Grayson Highlands Mount Rogers

Mount Rogers, at 5,729 feet, is the highest point in Virginia.

Mt. Rogers, Whitetop Mountain, and several other impressive crests are located off Route 58



Eastern Bluebird, ©John R. Ford

a nesting box provided by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. A female ruffed grouse emerged from a roadside thicket with her brood of chicks, providing lunchtime entertainment.

Clinch Mountain WMA

Clinch Mountain is one of Virginia's largest state-owned wildlife management areas. It is located ap-



Great-horned Owl. ©John R. Ford

Discover Our Wild Side

If you would like more information about wildlife and birding destinations in southwestern Virginia then you will want to pick up a copy of the *Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, Mountain Area Guide*. This guide provides a detailed description of both the loops and the sites located along those loops, so you know

what to expect. For each loop, you will find maps, directions and contact information. Each site description includes history, best season to visit, special features, and possible side trips. Symbols indicate services and activities available at each site. To order your free copy call toll free 1-866-VABIRDS (1-866-822-4737).

about 25 miles east of Abingdon in an area that includes the Grayson Highlands State Park.

These mountainous areas are mentioned often in *Virginia's Birdlife—An Annotated Checklist*, published by the Virginia Society of Ornithology, especially with regard to nesting songbirds. The state's peak count of 51 Canada warblers, for example, was made at Mt. Rogers. The Highlands have breeding populations of Swainson's warblers and northern waterthrushes, representing the northern and southern edges, respectively, of their summer ranges. The Nashville warbler, whose summer range is generally considered southern Canada and the Great Lakes region, is believed to nest in the Mt. Rogers area. The magnolia warbler is a common summer resident.

Grayson Highlands State Park is a large, uncrowded natural area featuring numerous amenities, breath-



American Goldfinch. ©John R. Ford

taking views, and an assortment of trails. A campground provides space for tent camping and also water and electric hookups for RVs. A visitor center features interpretive displays on the human history and natural history of the Appalachians.

The park has numerous trails for both hikers and horseback riders, and our favorite is the hike from the visitor center to Twin Pinnacles,



©Dwight Dyke

rocky outcroppings that afford an expansive view. This spot provides a great vantage point for fall hawk monitoring.

The trail is fairly short at 1.6 miles and is easy to negotiate. It winds through a variety of woodland habitat and emerges at the summit of Haw Orchard Mountain, named for the hawthorne bushes that grow on the mountainside.

As we were walking the trail in early June we heard an unfamiliar bird song and soon located a singing bird perched atop a dead spruce. It was a dark-eyed junco, a bird we are accustomed to seeing on the coast where we live in winter, when it sings rarely if at all. They nest in summer in the higher elevations of the Appalachians, usually above 3,000 feet. Soon after, we spotted another breeding bird, a red-eyed vireo, singing in a trailside tree.

The Virginia Creeper Trail

The 34-mile Virginia Creeper Trail connects Abingdon with the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. It began as an Indian footpath, was later used by European pioneers, and in the early 1900s a railroad was built along it, thus facilitating the removal of timber and iron ore from the mountains. The Creeper made its last run in 1977, and the rail bed is

now a hiking and biking trail. It is a great resource for birders, providing access to a wide range of habitats and elevations.

There are more than a dozen access points along the trail, and we began at one at a lower elevation, off Rt. 677 about 4 miles east of Abingdon. An old wooden trestle crossed farmland and pasture, and as cattle grazed below us we watched a downy woodpecker bring grubs to her chicks in a cavity in a snag, which was about eye-level with us. As the trail entered a forested section we saw a pair of northern orioles foraging along the edge, as well as a pair of northern bobwhites. In the trees along the trail were the ubiquitous indigo buntings.

waited. Soon we heard a common yellowthroat, and a pair of yellow-billed cuckoos flew past. From somewhere in the distance, we heard the loud call of a pileated woodpecker. An American robin foraged for insects in a clearing at the end of the trestle.

The trail curved around the side of the mountain and disappeared into the foliage. Below us a small stream sparkled in a shaft of sunlight. The buntings sang. It was, we



Scarlet Tanager, ©Rob & Ann Simpson



Virginia Creeper Trail ©Curtis Badger

As we left open land we began to see and hear warblers. A male hooded warbler hunted in a thicket on a hillside, and we spotted a black-throated green warbler in an oak tree. We heard an Acadian flycatcher far back in the woods, and not far away we spotted an eastern wood-pewee.

We stopped on a gently curving trestle that crossed a streambed and

agreed, an uncommonly good place to look for birds. □

Curtis Badger is a freelance outdoor writer and photographer who lives on Virginia's Eastern Shore. He has authored numerous books. One of the most recent being, Virginia's Wild Side—50 Outdoor Adventures from the Mountains to the Ocean, published by University of Virginia Press and is available at local bookstores.

Lifestyles of the Furry, Fin

Why not go natural this summer with a trip to the new Virginia Living Museum?

by Emily M. Grey

Virginia has some of the greatest diversity of wildlife, habitats and natural heritage of any other state. Just recently, a new resource reopened its doors to tell the living story of these wonders of our Commonwealth. People of all ages, backgrounds and interests will be educated and entertained.

A 6-foot diameter globe suspends

"Last year 30,000 students were turned away from our facility," said Chris Lewis, the museum's Education Director. "Now, our scientific building, with museum attached and four new classrooms, can accommodate many more pre-kindergarten through 12th graders, band competitors and others."

Indeed, tens of thousands more annual visitors can discover this amazing space.

Schools as far as Pennsylvania

©Dwight Dyke



©Dwight Dyke

over a double helix stairway, symbolizing life. It is the focal point of the new Virginia Living Museum, which reopened on March 28, 2004, in Newport News. A \$22.6 million expansion created a 62,000-square-foot building, which more than triples the facility's initial dimensions.

and North Carolina travel here regularly to observe Virginia's diverse native wildlife. Herein lies the facility's resourcefulness: Most specimens of the Commonwealth can be viewed in one place. That's more biota than most people will see in a lifetime.



The Virginia Living Museum, in Newport News, has been one of the best places in the state to learn about many of Virginia's wildlife species. Each year thousands of people, young and old, visit the museum. To better accommodate the public, and the wild inhabitants, the museum has just finished a massive expansion.

med and Feathered



"Our mission is to educate the public about Virginia's natural resources by showing complete ecosystem exhibits of plants and animals in their beach, woods and other natural environments," says Gloria Lombardi, Executive Director. "The new part has lots of pizzazz."

"This is a unique opportunity for visitors to go into an environment and see its types of trees, birds, mammals and other life," she continues. "You can't do this many places."

The New

Four major galleries feature walk-through habitats and close encoun-



©Emily Grey

With the new growth the Virginia Living Museum has tripled in size. The extra space also means that the museum can continue to expand its educational outreach programs and offer visitors additional opportunities to view some of Virginia's unique wildlife species.

ters with indigenous species. Living interpreters, in lieu of push-buttons, answer questions throughout the museum. Each gallery has a Discovery Center where experts explain phenomena and delight as youth pick up shells, skeletons and other innocuous items.

The **Coastal Plain Gallery** depicts the habitat of the Chesapeake



Virginia Living Museum

524 J. Clyde Morris Blvd.
Newport News, VA
757-595-1900

www.valivingmuseum.org

Check the Calendar of Events.

Businesses, civic groups, churches and wedding parties can rent the new facility.

Hours:

Memorial to Labor Day:

Mon. – Sat. 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Sun. Noon – 5 P.M.

Labor to Memorial Day:

9 A.M. to 6 P.M.

Admission:

Adults: \$10.50

Children (ages 3 to 12): \$7.50

Children (ages 2 and under): free

Planetarium: \$3

Combination tickets:

Adults \$12.50

Children \$9.50

Bay, the world's most luxuriant nursery. A loggerhead turtle, black drum and nurse shark swim about a 30,000-gallon aquarium. Stories of endangered and recovering species are rejuvenated with live sturgeon and rockfish.

Fifty or so birds wing about a 5,500 square-foot Coastal Plain Aviary. The split-level Cypress Swamp supports birds and bird-watchers on both tiers. Alligators, ducks and vegetation of the Great Dismal Swamp creep, swim and thrive amongst the tupelo.

The hub of the **Piedmont and Mountain Gallery** is the fall line of the James River in Richmond. Boomers (red squirrels), catfish and smallmouth bass enliven this rolling region.

The two-story Appalachian Cove leads to a refreshing waterfall cascading into a trout pool framed by mountain laurel and rhododen-



©Emily Grey

Being able to view hundreds of Virginia's indigenous species in their natural setting is one of the major attractions of the museum.

drons. Eastern hellbenders crawl about the Blue Ridge region.

At the staircase base is a model of a dinosaur with a touchable footprint. These massive reptiles may have roamed Virginia's foothills about 200 million years ago.

Ghost crabs, moon jellyfish and flying squirrels scurry, drift and carry on other behaviors in Vir-



ginia's World of Darkness. Humans may come face to face with burrowing pine voles and robust sharks.

In **Virginia's Underground Gallery**, walkers mosey through a reproductive limestone cave with blind cave fish. A cutaway of fossil layers along the James River's steep banks and colorful gems of an underground mine will also wow budding spelunkers.

Included in the makeover are larger outdoor habitats. Connectors to a 3/4-mile elevated boardwalk winds across Deer Park Lake and through ten acres of woodlands.

The center's newest inhabitant, a juvenile bald eagle, was rescued after being shot. Like 200 other resi-

North America's most endangered mammal, the red wolf, became part of a Federal Species Survival Plan last year. Two healthy females roam about in a fenced-in, natural, outdoor setting.

By summer, there will likely be a natural habitat for river otters and beavers. Other future projects in-

If you're looking for something really wild to do this summer, or anytime of the year, the Virginia Living Museum is a natural.

clude creating habitats for mountain lion, black bear, porcupine, turkey vulture, barred owl and peregrine falcon along the boardwalk.



dent species, such as bobcats, foxes and herons, this creature could not survive in the wild.

The Revived

Originally known as the Junior Nature Museum and Planetarium, the facility first opened in 1966. Classrooms, exhibit halls and more wildlife were added over time. In 1976, it was renamed the Peninsula Nature and Science Center. The Virginia Living Museum name change occurred in 1987. In the planning stages for years, the state, city and private donors made the newest addition a reality.

People continue to be enchanted by the planetarium. Now with a revolving 360-degree dome, the rooftop Abbitt Observatory highlights the older section. A university-grade, 16-inch Meade telescope affords views of the sun on clear days and stars on select nights.

A butterfly garden, backyard wildlife habitat and outdoor Wetlands Aviary also enhance the living site. Honeybees swarm about a beehive and travel through an acrylic tube that leads outside.

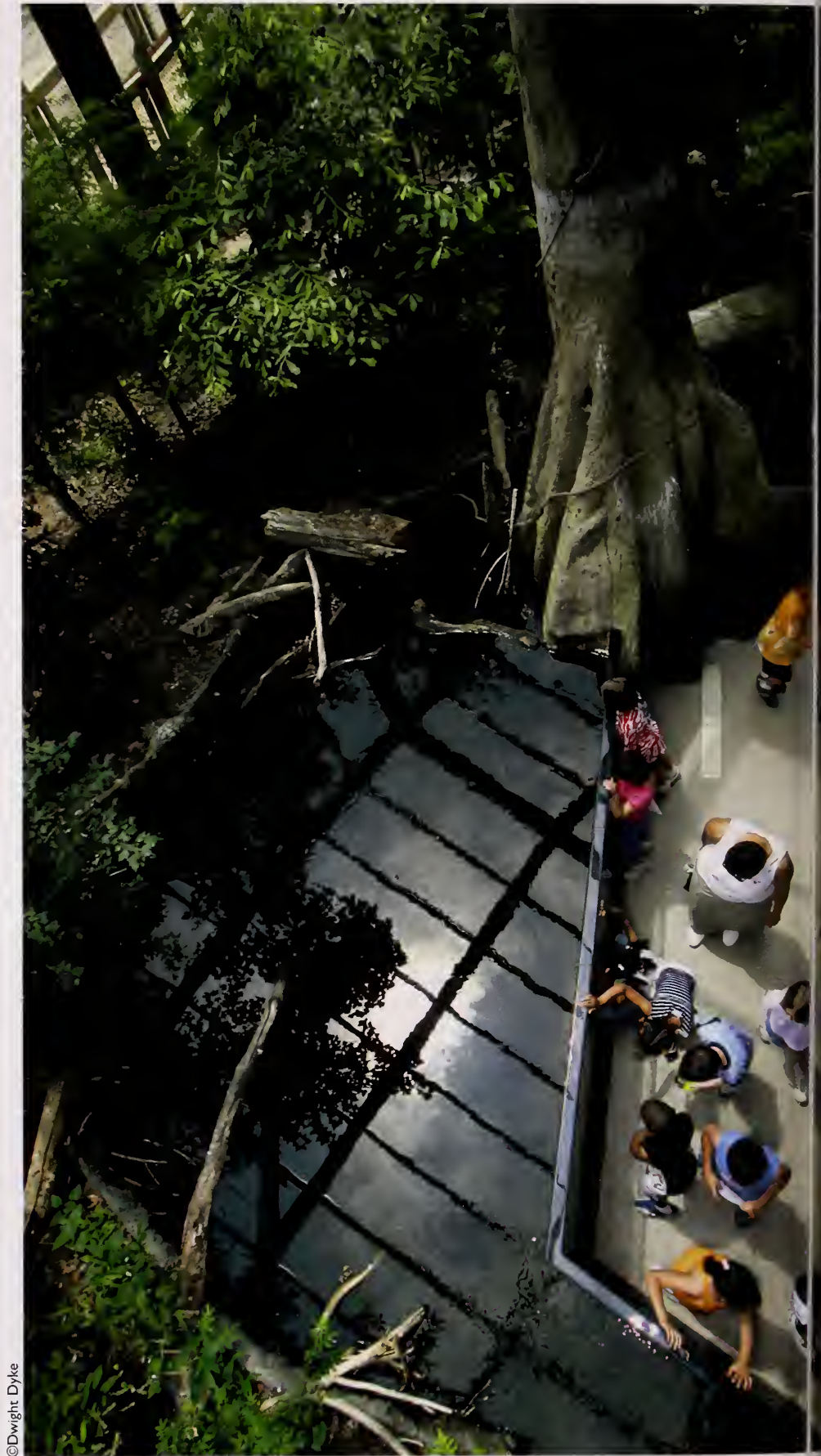
"We offer numerous off-site curricula for schools," says Chris Lewis. "We take students on field trips to study sites throughout the state. They examine mines, go canoeing and discover while learning.

"All education programs comply with the Virginia State Standards of Learning for Science Objectives in museum classrooms," she adds.

The museum offers a variety of outreach programs. Volunteers with Mother Nature's Traveling Road Show conduct 30-minute presentations with live wildlife. Retirement homes, community centers, summer day camps, day care, church groups, youth groups, scouts and libraries benefit from these animal demonstrations.

"Our message is to instill pride in Virginia's natural resources and a commitment to preserve the natural beauty here and in other states," explains Gloria Lombardi. "We hope that people will have a better appreciation of wildlife. □

Emily Grey is a naturalist, outdoor writer, photojournalist and attorney from Virginia's Eastern Shore.



©Dwight Dyke



2004 Outdoor Calendar of Events

August 13-15: *Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show*, 3000 Mechanicsville Tnpk., Richmond; www.sportsman-show.com.

August 20-22: *Mother/Daughter Outdoor Event*, Appomattox. An educational opportunity for women 9 and older to learn skills for outdoor pursuits. For more information call 804-367-0656 or visit our Web site at www.dgif.virginia.gov/events/index.html.

September 17-19: *Virginia Outdoor Weekend*, Westmoreland State Park. A program designed to give the entire family a chance to add to their outdoor experiences. Activities include: canoeing, fishing, outdoor photography, archery, skeet shooting, wilderness survival and much more. For more information call (804) 367-0656 or visit our Web site at www.dgif.virginia.gov/events/index.html. □

Book Review

by Marika Byrd

Watching Wildlife

Tips, Gear and Great Places for Enjoying America's Wild Creatures

Mark Damian Duda

Paper back, 117 pages, 6" X 9"

ISBN: 1-56044-315-4

This is another in the Watchable Wildlife Series by FalconGuides. Mark Duda has captured a wealth of information into a small reference book and organizes it in a meaningful way. Life experiences and excel-

lent quotations contribute to the "mind's eye" understanding about his presentations.

The first few chapters include general experiences, even from children who have participated in wildlife activities. The National Watchable Wildlife Program is explained, and the book provides information about the human impact of wildlife viewing. As Duda says, "Safe and responsible viewing is of utmost importance if watchers and wildlife are to coexist in this world." He outlines some of the challenges biologists face because of "inappropriate human-wildlife interactions," citing examples of damage that has transpired due to carelessness or plain ignorance. Specific examples of appropriate ways to interact with the animal kingdom are included. For example, what to do when you are around black or grizzly bears or mountain lions.

In the "Gear Up" section, Duda lists the type of maps, reference books, checklists and other information available to the wildlife watcher planning a trip of any consequence—whether on public or private lands. This section covers scents and sunglasses, packs and bags, clothing, and optics one should never leave home without.

Once afield, Duda discusses his "four steps for successful wildlife viewing: look in the right place, look at the right time, develop wildlife viewing skills and techniques, and understand the species and its habits." He then explains how to keep yourself safe and have a wonderful time in the outdoors among our abundance of wildlife species. A section is devoted to wildlife man-

agement and the role professionals play in the preservation of the lands and its animal inhabitants. This includes the control of water, controlled burns, nesting boxes and platforms, plantings, law enforcement, seasonal closures, and wildlife population monitoring, etc.

No book would be complete without photography; he lists do's and don'ts as well as equipment information.

Finally, the book includes ways to assure wildlife into the future. Duda's ideas include sharing positive adult attitudes about wildlife watching to our future generations, keeping current on important wildlife issues facing your state or the nation, donating time and/or money for nongame programs, or joining and supporting a conservation organization.

This book would be a wonderful purchase for individuals who are not familiar with wildlife watching as it serves as a good place to get correct information, and learn what to do and not do on their escapades and to begin enjoying and interacting with nature close to or farther from home. It is also a good review reference for those who are "old hats" at this activity.

Mark Duda is executive director of Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, Virginia, is a wildlife biologist and is a noted authority on wildlife viewing. He travels extensively and shares his first-hand experiences throughout his writings.

For more information on other books in the series contact Falcon at 800/582-2665 or write to Falcon, P.O. Box 1718, Helena, MT 59624. Videos are also available as a companion to

the books. Books sell for \$9.95 and videos are VHS 30 minutes at \$19.95, plus shipping and handling. □

Virginia Outdoors

Hunting for something to watch on television this fall? Then tune into *Virginia Outdoors*. Back for a second season *Virginia Outdoors* is packed with exciting local as well as regional hunting and outdoor information. Included in the 2004 fall lineup are exciting black powder and archery whitetail deer hunts, spring gobbler hunting, snow geese, tundra swans and pheasant hunting.

Virginia Outdoors is produced by PSR Outdoors of Smithfield, Va. and is hosted by Larry Jones, who is an avid hunter and the owner of PSR Outdoors. You can catch *Virginia Outdoors* each Saturday morning on WTVZ (WB-33) in the greater Hampton Roads area. The show airs weekly at 6:30 a.m. and will run from August 21st through October 24th. For a complete listing of shows and additional information about *Virginia Outdoors* and PSR Outdoors visit www.psroudoors.com/tvshow.htm contact Larry Jones at (757) 365-0448. □



Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show

Now in its 20th season, the Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show returns August 13-15 to the Show-Place, 3000 Mechanicsville Turnpike, in Richmond. If you're into

hunting or just like being in the outdoors then this is a great way to kick off the new season. There will be plenty of activities for the whole family, including special seminars on hunting techniques, exhibits like the NRA Great American Whitetail Collection, and vendors displaying the latest in hunting equipment. This is also your chance to see some of the biggest deer and turkeys harvested by hunters from around the state in The Virginia Deer and Gobbler Classic.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' (VDGIF) biologists, game wardens, and a host of trained professionals will be available to answer your wildlife-related questions and offer handouts with information on hunting, fishing, boating and wildlife watching opportunities in Virginia. If you want a chance to sharpen your shooting and hunting skills then stop by the Hunter Education video-hunting simulator. Willy Wilmoth, one of the most unique environmental carvers and sculptors in the country, encourages children of all ages to stop by to lend a hand and help with his latest wildlife masterpiece. Willy will also be giving away an original, one-of-a-kind, work of wildlife art to one lucky youngster during the show. If you're wondering what to buy after you have loaded up on camo, tree-stand and that new pair of boots, then stop by the big, green VDGIF booth and purchase a new hunting license, a Virginia Wildlife Calendar, and a subscription to *Virginia Wildlife* magazine.

The Outdoor Sportsman Show is sponsored by the Virginia Deer Hunters Association and is the largest show of its kind in the state. Hugh Crittenden, founder, points out that this is a great time for men, women and children to get together and help promote hunting as a fun and safe sport, and to continue the tradition. If you would like more information call, (804) 748-7520 or visit their Web site at www.sportsman-show.com. □



Wild Letters

"It's time to put litter in its place," writes Ralph White, Manager of the James River Park System in Richmond. Over the last few years the Richmond area, like much of Virginia, has experienced a rapid growth in the amount of people who are using and enjoying the states natural resources. Many of these people are new to this country and they often face language barriers, and a clear understanding of local laws. Unfortunately, they also bring environmental problems based on the way they used their natural resources in the countries that they lived in, such as how to properly dispose of trash.

"The solution to the litter problem is education," says White. With that in mind, visitors to the James River Park will now find new multilingual signs throughout the park addressing the issue of litter. White believes if the new signs are going to be effective the information needs to be clear, short and simple, and more importantly the signs have to communicate across different cultures, ages and education levels. White also adds, "No matter who you are or where you came from, we all need to work together if we want to keep the James River and our natural resources clean, and a place that we can all enjoy." □



Grin and Bear It

by Jennifer Worrell

Game Warden Steve Ferguson found a new use for his paintball gun last fall when residents in a subdivision in Albemarle County reported seeing a black bear sow resting comfortably in an oak tree between two houses. When Ferguson, Sergeant Kenneth Dove, Warden Aaron Hurd, and two Albemarle police officers responded to the call, they found themselves in a difficult position. Ordinarily Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' wildlife biologists would chemically immobilize the bear, but this bear visited the neighborhood during hunting season. The wardens and biologists would not allow a bear with immobilization drugs in its system to potentially be harvested and consumed by an unknowing hunter.

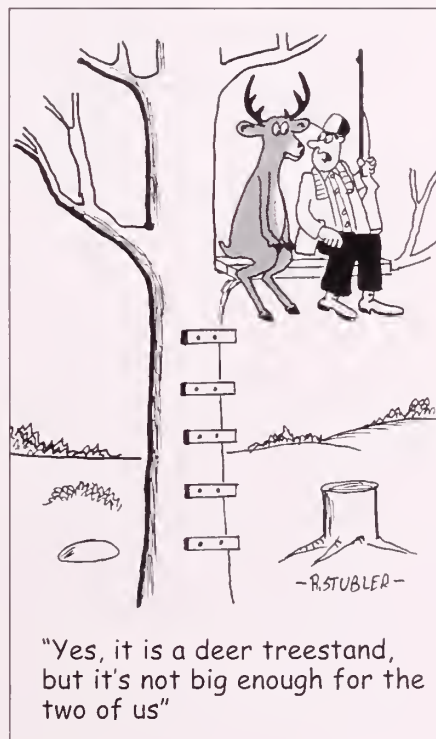
Officer Ferguson and Sergeant Dove decided to dislodge the bear using a pair of paintball guns in hope she would move to a less populated area. After several splatters from the paint guns, the bear decided to come down from the oak, but promptly climbed another tree. The officers continued to pelt the stubborn sow, but she refused to come down from her new perch. While paintball guns are not issued by the Department as standard equipment they did prove to be useful for moving the bear to a location that now allowed them to better deal with the situation in a safer manner.

With the bear now resting in a much lower location in a new tree, biologist Ron Hughes arrived on the scene and decided to tranquilize the bear. Shortly afterward she landed



safely on the ground. The officers quickly checked her for injuries, and then loaded her into a cage for transport.

Hughes contacted fellow biologist, Bob Ellis, for assistance. The two then called the Wildlife Center of Virginia to see if they had any space for a bear. Coincidentally, they had just finished an appropriate enclosure that morning. The bear could be held without human contact and released later when the drugs were safely out of her system. □

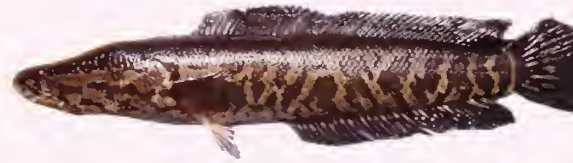


Snakehead Fish Hotline

1-800-770-4951

by Julia Dixon

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) announced the establishment of an in-state toll-free telephone number to report snakehead fish catches. The number is 1-800-770-4951 and is staffed 24 hours every day of the week. Anglers should call that number if they suspect they have caught a snakehead fish. Out-of-state callers reporting snakehead fish caught in Virginia waters should call directly



to 804-367-1258. In addition, VDGIF announced that representatives from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will join the Snakehead Fish Incident Management Team. The team was formed to coordinate issues related to the recent findings of snakehead fish in the Potomac River watershed. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has also committed \$30,000 to support the Department's response efforts. With thirteen northern snakehead fish found in the Potomac River watershed within one month, the primary focus of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is to determine if an established population of these fish exists. The Department is asking anglers to go to its Web site at www.dgif.virginia.gov to view a fact sheet with a photograph of a snakehead fish and illustrations of similar-looking native species, the bowfin and American eel. Snakehead fish are not native to North America. They are top-level predators that can have significant impacts by feeding on and out-competing native fishes, disrupting natural aquatic systems.



On The Water

by Jim Crosby

Distress Signals Onboard?

When did you last open your flare gun box to check its contents? I hope it was before a law enforcement officer asked to see it to determine if your flares met the legal requirements.

Distress signals are like many similar items onboard, you don't look for them until you need them. Yet, when you need them, you expect to put your hands on them immediately, and have them work to accomplish their purpose. Can you guarantee that?

Visual Distress Signals (VSDs) are required at all times on all boats carrying up to six passengers for hire and all recreational boats 16 feet or greater in length when operating on coastal waters. Boats less than 16 feet are required to carry only night VSDs when operated on coastal waters at night.

This regulation applies to all coastal water and those rivers two miles, or more, wide at the mouth, and up to the first point the river narrows to less than two miles.

Pyrotechnic VSDs (flares) must be U.S. Coast Guard approved, in serviceable condition and stowed to be readily accessible. Each are marked with a date, beyond which, the manufacturer does not consider them serviceable. A minimum of three must be within the serviceable date appearing on them. Often, flares with expired dates are retained as backup but they will not count toward the legal carry requirement.

USCG approved pyrotechnic

VSDs include hand-held or aerial red flares, hand-held or floating orange smoke, and launchers for aerial red meteors or parachute flares.

Non-pyrotechnic VSDs must carry the manufacturer's certification that they meet USCG requirements. They must be in serviceable condition and stowed to be readily accessible. This group includes: an orange distress flag for daytime use and an electric distress light for night use. An ordinary flashlight does not meet this requirement because it must be manually flashed and does not normally produce enough candlepower.

Many manufacturers produce a complete kit, packaged in single containers that meet the legal carry requirements for a modest price. If you are like many of our recreational boaters, you bought the kit and tucked it away onboard. For those of you who opted for this solution, I have two questions: 1.) What year did you place your kit onboard? And, 2.) Did you check the kit prior to placing it onboard to see when the dates expired, did it contain all the necessary pieces, and were they all in working order?

My questions are based on the fact that many outlets place these kits on open display where pilferage can occur and sometimes they are kept in inventory beyond the expiration dates. So, unless you checked, you could have a kit that had expired VSDs when you purchased it, and/or you could be missing one of

the required items that may have fallen out during handling or is otherwise missing. When a law enforcement officer asks to check your kit is not the time to discover one or the other of these possibilities. May I suggest you make this at least an annual check on your own?

To further complicate the issue, we are now advised of the following:

Flare Gun Malfunction Warning

A defective opening mechanism in some 12-gauge plastic flare guns manufactured by Olin (now Orion Safety Products) prior to 2000 may not open wide enough to accept a flare cartridge. Guns with a modification to correct the possible problem are marked with U.S. Coast Guard approval code 160 028//12/1. Boaters with older flare guns should check the operation of the opening mechanism now and at the start of each boating season. If the breech will not open wide enough to accept a cartridge, the gun should be sent back for a replacement. Send defective guns to:

Orion Safety Products
Marine Division
315 N. 500W
Peru, IN 46970

For questions, you can call 1-800-851-5260. □

For questions or feedback, I always welcome your email to: jimcrosby@aol.com

RECIPES

by Joan Cone

Dove Season Is Nearly Here

Doves are so easy to pluck. Leaving them whole provides a greater variety of recipes. Keeping the skin on preserves moisture and makes for easier browning.

These birds require either quick cooking or a slower moist method using a covered casserole, oven bag or aluminum foil. Regardless of preparation, dove meat is delicious. Allow at least three or four birds a serving.

Menu

Dove Casserole

Microwave Sweet Potatoes

Sweet And Sour Broccoli Florets

Plum-Peach Crisp

Dove Casserole

12 whole doves

Salt to taste

Flour

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup butter or margarine

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound fresh mushrooms

1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups white table wine

Preheat oven to 350° F. Place flour and salt in a shallow dish and dust dove lightly. Melt butter in skillet and place birds skin side down. Sauté until browned on both sides. Remove birds from skillet and place them, breast side up, in a casserole with lid. Add mushrooms and parsley and pour enough wine into casserole to half cover the birds. Cover and place in oven for 45 minutes or until meat is fork tender. Spoon the clear wine gravy over the doves. Serves 3 to 4.

Microwave Sweet Potatoes

1 oven bag, large size (14"x20")

1 tablespoon flour

3 pounds medium sweet potatoes, peeled

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed brown sugar

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup orange juice

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon grated orange peel

3 tablespoons butter or margarine

Shake flour in oven bag and place in a 13x9x2-inch microwave-safe baking dish. Slice sweet potatoes $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick; set aside. Add brown sugar, orange juice, nutmeg and orange peel to oven bag. Squeeze oven bag to blend ingredients. Add sweet potato slices to oven bag. Turn oven bag to coat potatoes with mixture.

Arrange potatoes in an even layer in oven bag and dot with butter. Close oven bag with nylon tie and cut six $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slits in top. Microwave on HIGH power 15 to 20 minutes or

until potatoes are tender, rotating dish after every 7 minutes. Let stand in oven bag 5 minutes. Stir before serving. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Sweet and Sour Broccoli Florets

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar

3 tablespoons cider vinegar

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 tablespoons water

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon prepared mustard

Dash each of salt, pepper and ground mustard

1 pound fresh broccoli florets

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the sugar, vinegar, oil, water, prepared mustard, salt, pepper and ground mustard. Shake well and set aside. Place broccoli in a steamer basket. Place in a saucepan over 1 inch of water and bring to a boil. Cover and steam for 5 to 8 minutes or until crisp-tender. Place in a serving bowl. Shake dressing, drizzle over broccoli and toss to coat. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Plum-Peach Crisp

Topping

1 cup flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed dark brown sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into pieces

2 teaspoons minced orange peel (orange part only)

Filling

$2\frac{3}{4}$ pounds plums, pitted, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wedges.

4 medium peaches, peeled, pitted, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wedges

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

Pinch of salt

Topping: Combine all ingredients in processor. Using on/off turns, process until mixture forms small moist clumps.

Filling: Mix all ingredients in bowl. Let stand at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter 8x8x2-inch glass baking dish. Spoon filling into prepared dish. Sprinkle topping over. Bake until fruit is tender and topping is brown and crisp, about 45 minutes. Spoon warm crisp into deep bowls. Serve with a scoop of ice cream or frozen yogurt, if desired. Makes 6 servings. □





Naturally Wild



story and illustration
by Spike Knuth



Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*

The other four similar empidonax flycatchers include the yellow-bellied, least, willow and alder flycatchers. They are all about the same size of 5½ inches, with two buffy-white wing bars and eye rings. The least, willow and possibly the alder flycatchers are most apt to be found in the mountains of Virginia, but the Acadian is common throughout the state.

The Acadian flycatcher appears dark grayish to grayish-olive green above, but when the light hits it right, a greenish tinge is evident. Its name "virescens" is Greek for "greenish," and one of its other names is green flycatcher. Its underparts are dull white, dusted with washes of light gray, yellow or green on its upper breast and flanks.

This little flycatcher is secretive and is usually heard rather than seen. Its song is a two or three syllable "pit-see" with a sharp and explosive upward inflection at the end. It also has a short "peet" call. Towards fall when it begins to migrate it becomes silent.

This bird likes the dense, shaded forest with a special liking for beech. However, it also likes southern swamplands of cypress and tupelo gum draped with Spanish moss. They also favor small mountain streams lined with rhododendron and linear forested corridors. In these types of habitat is where they will nest.

The Acadian flycatcher shows up in Virginia in early-April. Its nest is a shallow, frail structure, usually in the fork of horizontal limbs, often hanging over water. The nest is built of plant fibers such as strips of bark, plant stems, grasses and held together with spider silk. In the South it readily uses Spanish moss. The nest itself is so thin that the two to four eggs can actually be seen through the bottom.

They feed mainly on insects, mainly flying insects, and probably some of the small wild berries in late summer. They perch on dead branches in the shade under the main canopy of the forest, sitting motionless except for an occasional jerk of its tail when it sings or calls. A larger flycatcher, the eastern wood pewee, has a similar habit but is identifiable by its lack of eye rings.

In late August and early-September, Acadian flycatchers begin southward movements to their wintering grounds in Columbia and Ecuador. □

Although it carries the name "Acadian," this small flycatcher is not found in old Acadia (Nova Scotia). Originally all members of the genus *Empidonax* were tagged with the name Acadian. As years went by, biologists began sorting out, identifying and renaming the different species, with *virescens* retaining the name Acadian.

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The New 2004-2005 Virginia Wildlife Calendar

Is Now Available



©John R. Ford

It's that time of year again to purchase the 2004-2005 Virginia Wildlife Calendar, one of the most informative and beautiful wildlife calendars in the country. No other calendar will give you the best times to go fishing and hunting, unique natural resource information that will amaze and educate you, and spectacular wildlife art and photographs that give you an up-close look at Virginia's incredible wildlife.

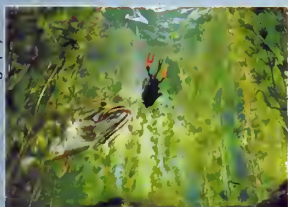
The Virginia Wildlife Calendar is a production of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and customers are re-

minded that the wildlife calendar starts in September 2004 and runs through August 2005. Quantities are limited and sales will run from July 15 through December 31, 2004, so don't wait. Order now!

The 2004-2005 Virginia Wildlife Calendars are \$10.00 each. Make check payable to: *Treasurer of Virginia* and send to Virginia Wildlife Calendar, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA. 23230-1104. If you would like to use your VISA or MasterCard you can order online at www.dgif.virginia.gov. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.



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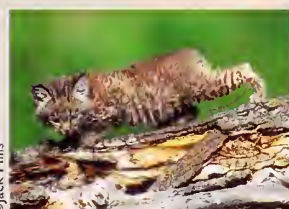
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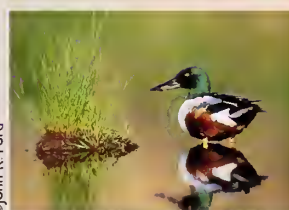
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